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THE "BLESSED BOYS" IN FAUST AND KLOPSTOCK.

THAT the "Selige Knaben" in the last scene of *Faust*, especially their mystic relation to the Pater Seraphicus and their gradual growth in spiritual insight and power, were suggested to Goethe by reminiscences of Swendenborgian theories on the nature of heavenly spirits, is generally recognized and beyond dispute. It seems, however, worthy of notice that long before Goethe wrote this scene, another German poet, probably also inspired, at least indirectly, by Swedenborg, had given a picture of the gradual transformation of the souls of children into heavenly youths which is strikingly like Goethe's representation of the change that comes over the Blessed Boys and over Faust himself as they ascend to ever higher regions.

Of the "Selige Knaben" the Pater Seraphicus says:

11918. Steigt hinan zu höh'rem Kreise,
Wachset immer unvermerkt,
Wie, nach ewig reiner Weise,
Gottes Gegenwart verstärkt.
Denn das ist der Geister Nahrung,
Die im freisten Aether waltet,
Ewigen Liebens Offenbarung
Die zur Seligkeit entfaltet.

And the "Selige Knaben" themselves say of Faust:

12076. Er überwächst uns schon
An mächtigen Gliedern ;
Wird treuer Pflege Lohn
Reichlich erwidern.
Wir wurden früh entfernt
Von Lebechören ;
Doch dieser hat gelernt,
Er wird uns lehren.

Does it not seem probable that in all this there is to be found a lingering reminiscence of the impressive picture which Klopstock in the sixteenth Canto of the *Messias* gives of the flight of

hosts of children through the heavenly regions and their growth in bodily shape as well as in spiritual insight? These are Klopstock's words:

320. Melodien, der süssesten Wonne Gespielinnen, stiegen
Mit dem Lispel empor der Engelharfen. Denn endlos
Kamen vom Ganges, vom Rhein, dem Niagara, und Nilus,
An den Cedern einher auf Tabor, Seelen der Kinder.
Wie gesondert von vielen und grossen Herden, an Einem
Langen Hügel hinab, genährt vom Frühlinge, Lämmer
Weiden, so kamen einher an des Tabor Haine die Seelen.
Aber der Richter richtete nicht. Sie wurden der Wege
Viele geführt, von Sterne geführt zu Sterne, bevor sie,
Himmliche Jünglinge nun, erhabnere Pfade betraten.
Manches sahn sie zuvor auf ihren Wegen, und lernten
Manches, umtanzt von fröhlichen Stunden.

Otto Lyon, *Goethes Verhältnis zu Klopstock*, pp. 30–103, shows that the strongest influence of Klopstock upon Goethe was exerted during the years 1770–75. Since Canto XVI of the *Messias* appeared in 1773, the above-quoted passage would have come to Goethe's knowledge during the time of his most eager interest in Klopstock, and would therefore have been most likely to retain its hold upon his memory.

KUNO FRANCKE.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY.